



poor and vulnerable, as they have during the whole post-war period. As well, the property tax, on which local governments heavily rely, is, on balance, regressive, if we assume that this tax is passed along to renters.

Not surprisingly, given these features of the politics of cities, we argue and struggle over how to make it easier for those hurt by redevelopment to have their voices heard; we worry about curtailing or altering the path of redevelopment; we attempt to improve the delivery of city services, especially to the needy and vulnerable; and we work to attract new businesses to the central city and attempt to keep in place the businesses already located there.

It is with these sorts of matters that analyses of city politics and city problems typically stop. We regularly repeat that we need to act nationally to mitigate the negative effects of national forces that are increasing inequality and reinforcing racial subordination. We consider ways to make the effects of city politics and policy less economically regressive. And sometimes we even consider whether the boundaries of local governments might be altered to enable them directly to attack urban problems thrown up by the effects of the parceling out of political authority to a large number of local governments in metropolitan areas.

However admirable such discussions and proposals are, something is missing. The words “city,” and “civic” suggest what it is. So far I have said nothing about citizenship, and neither, for the most part, have the politics and policies I have just mentioned.

This is very odd, since we are supposed to be, and to some degree are, a self-governing republic. This is the type of political regime where the citizenry carries the greatest burden of governing. They must choose who is to govern them, judge their performance, and directly participate in a variety of ways in the process of government itself. The question of citizenship is even more apparent once we recognize that, if our policies and politics are unsatisfactory, this must be in part because something is lacking in the citizenry. The qualities that citizens of a self-governing or democratic republic need are thus a matter of the first importance.

Here then is a fundamental problem. We must talk about the qualities that citizens need if we are to do much about the state of our

cities because, to the degree that their state is a consequence of national and local policies, significant change in policy must almost certainly come from significant change in the citizenry. But—and this

participate in the life of the larger society. They have thus concerned themselves with such matters as providing all with a minimum income, necessary health care, economic security, equal protection of the law, and civil rights. One underlying promise of modern

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of the administrators and public officials who thought it their task to provide the less well-off of their brethren with the wherewithal to lead a life of minimal decency. It was a result of such clashes that participatory democracy was read out of the modern liberal lexicon and returned to its original home in New Left political movements. Again, I will return to this matter.

Now, it is a giant step forward to see that the promise of American life to realize equal rights and political equality requires a lessening of the inequality of resources and opportunities that afflict us. But resources and opportunities are not enough, if we are serious about fostering democratic citizenship. At a minimum, such a focus neglects the dispositions and competences that a democratic citizenry needs if it is to carry out the defining task of a democracy, *i elf*-government.

The chief failure in modern liberalism's conception of citizenship stems from its being a centralizing doctrine. In this, conservatives are correct. And in this, modern liberalism is much like its cousin, European social democracy—the political outlook of those who created the welfare state. Social democrats are not really interested in citizens except in their role as voters who provide the majorities that are needed to govern, and as the clients of a state that is to provide them with a wide variety of services.

The principal concern of social democracy is equality, not self-government. A social democratic regime relies on strong political parties, bargaining among political elites, and a disciplined civil service that will do the bidding of its political masters while acting as a custodian of the public interest. These features of the regime allow it to pursue major initiatives by insulating political leaders from the views of the citizenry. The citizens make their views known at elections; in between elections, it is the job of political leaders to lead and to listen to citizens only when they are deeply divided, or when leaders have few other choices.

Modern American liberalism is not so centralizing and not so insulating in its intentions. Not the least of the reasons is that American politics is so structured as to make both of these impossible on the scale of European social democracies. Still, the center of gravity of modern American liberalism is not to energize citizens, nor to provide opportunities for them to participate in the act of self-

government. As with its cousin, its principal task is to provide citizens with resources, services, instructions, and information. A fully realized modern liberal state would necessarily be highly bureaucratic and centralized. It would seek uniformity in how it treats

many over the few, when the few are stigmatized and weak. Finally, conservatives have helped make clear to their fellow citizens that local governments are especially valuable in democracies, because their workings are more comprehensible, participation in their affairs is easier to manage, and, should any particular local government prove unattractive, reliance on local governments offers a low-cost means of escape by allowing easy exit to other governments.

However, in their advocacy of local government as a principal vehicle for governing the society, conservatives have looked away when it comes to a close examination of local political life. They have seen clearly the kinds of advantages I have set out, but have neglected the fact that local government has been an easy, convenient device for maintaining racial subordination and economic inequality, corrupting the public realm and depriving a wide range of citizens of

their problems. And self-interest is one of those motives that market conservatives are given to praising. Let us not rely on other-regarding motives, they say, for these motives are weak and lead to the reign of hypocrisy. But it is in my self-interest, and in the interests of people who are in situations much like mine, to use government to help line our pockets, and thus to use the powers of the state to transfer other people's money into our hands. Moreover, it is in my and similarly situated people's self-interest to use the power of the state to help create and protect opportunities for us to enrich ourselves and to wield power over others whose activities may interfere with ours. If we all do this, we will, of course, get active, large-scale government, which is not a hopelessly distorted version of how we have come to the present pattern of government in the United States.

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citizenry must, at the least, also have a significant measure of public spiritedness. Many, perhaps most citizens, must think that there is a public interest and that lawmakers are to try to give it concrete meaning. Democratic citizens, moreover, must also be proudly independent, that is, be confident and proud of their ability to judge their existing and prospective lawmakers. These are the minimum requirements.

I think many Americans understand these requirements, even as they find it difficult to display much public spiritedness and independence of judgment. It is now a common view that Americans in general display a growing cynicism about the workings of government and broadly distrust it. Fewer and fewer people believe that their fellow citizens or their governors have any abiding concern for the public interest. More and more citizens, partly as a result of their observation about the behavior or dispositions of others, are increasingly disengaged from political life. They vote less often, they “bowl alone,” and otherwise consign political life to the back of their emotional burner.

As for worries about the proud independence that a democratic citizenry needs, some of it comes out in the form of worries about those who, through a variety of life paths, cannot seem to manage their own lives, no less think that they should concern themselves with the broader life of the society. Another way in which worries about a lack of proud independence comes is in the form of criticism of those who are all too independent. These are thought to behave as those figures Tom Wolfe portrayed as “masters of the universe.” Their pride is overweening, and they think it is their right to pick and choose among all the world’s fruits. As a result, they are uninterested in what happens on their own doorstep; they are proud and independent, but they do not use these attributes in the service of our collective life.

For the rest of my remarks, I want to concentrate on the problem of public spiritedness. It is in worse repair than the disposition towards proud independence. The forces promoting the latter are still, I think, visibly at work.

If we are to think carefully about democratic citizenship—about the qualities citizens need in a democratic regime—we need an account of the kind of political order we Americans are supposed to

be. To put it more grandly, we need a theory of the political constitution of our self-governing republic, of how to constitute it.

Where are we to look for one? The appropriate place to start—and it is all I will consider here—is Madison’s account in *The Federalist* .

substantially formed by attachments to ethnic, sexual, and similar groups, who are regularly engaged in conflict with one another; and there is the regular experience of economic insecurity that for many us strengthens the natural inclination to look to the protection of those we count as nearest and dearest.

Thus, we must make provision for *feign* public spiritedness. Where shall we focus our efforts? John Stuart Mill argued that it is only in local political life that a significant number of people can gain the kind of political experience that is necessary for engendering public spiritedness. And it is experience we need; public spiritedness cannot easily be learned from books or in school. Even if it is not engendered by experience, it certainly can only be given form and direction by actual involvement in an effort to make sense of the public interest. As a very perceptive student of these matters said, when men and women do not participate in public affairs, they have *been* about these matters and have difficulty disentangling their nightmares and fondest dreams from the shape of the world as it is and might reasonably become. Walter Lippmann commented in the same vein that “the kind of self-education which a self-governing people must obtain can only be had through daily experience.”

Nothing very complicated is being said here. In the politics of a properly structured democracy, the participants are constantly pressured to justify the proposals they are making in terms larger than their self-interest. It is embarrassing and costly to argue that my fellow citizens or lawmakers should support some policy because it will make me rich or enrich my constituents. We must, that is, think about larger interests, the public interest, if only to have the language to cloak our real interests. Moreover, as in much of life, if we pretend long enough, we come to learn and appreciate the point of the words

Thus, we are brought to think about the political life of cities in

4) They must have the capacity to make moderately complex judgments about public matters, i.e., they need to have some measure of cognitive complexity.

5) They must have some degree of respect for their fellow citizens, and, thus, there must be a substantial degree of mutual respect among the citizenry.

6) They must be concerned with the esteem in which others hold them—and, central to the granting of such esteem, there must be a reputation for reasoned analysis of public matters.

There is no time to talk here about all of these, even at modest length, so I will content myself with making a few remarks about several of them. Each of the ones I will comment on has a substantial implication for how we organize our society.

To even get started on the project of fostering public spiritedness, citizens must have some inclination to judge political life in terms of interests broader than any narrow account of their own interests and those of their immediate circle. Political life can only reinforce or diminish dispositions; it cannot create them from scratch. People who cannot imagine why they should help a frail stranger across the street are people for whom political life can do little—except perhaps to secure their possessions and provide them with largesse that will make them and their circle comfortable. Talk of the public interest for such people can only seem hollow words spoken by cynical and

On proud independence (as one of the foundations of public spiritedness, not with regard to its intrinsic value): however public-spirited a citizen might be, if that person doesn't have confidence in the worth of his or her own opinions, that these opinions deserve to be

government that they can serve as a school of citizenship, rather than as local administrative arms of federal government bureaucracies.

We need, I think, a new political vision, one that takes more seriously than many liberals and conservatives do a full realization of the American republic and all that this entails. At the heart of this vision must be a revived and restructured local political life. At the risk of some confusion, we might call this a “republican” (with a small “r”) vision. It is republican, because its central concern is the realization of the American republic. We do not wish to be just any sort of democracy employing just any sort of popular rule. Rather, we wish to bring to fruition the republican form of democracy, where the people are capable of holding their leaders to a vision of the public interest. This was Madison’s hope for us, the kind of political order he hoped would emerge from the passage of the new constitution, which is still our constitution.

Thinking about cities and citizenship is not then a luxury, something over and above thinking about poverty, race, violence, and the other staples of urban discussion. Our ability to handle these matters is affected by the overall shape of our political order; this, in turn, is affected by the kind of citizenry we are; and that is shaped by the character of our local political life.

There is, of course, a chicken-and-egg problem in all that I have been saying. A citizenry poorly equipped to govern itself will have a local political life poorly equipped to foster those very qualities that democratic citizens need. In turn, citizens without public spiritedness and other qualities that a democratic citizenry needs make it unlikely that we will pursue the national policies that make it possible for cities to foster democratic citizenship. Instead, we are likely to enact policies that will make the forming of citizens difficult, and even policies that significantly undercut the foundations of democratic citizenship that are already in place.

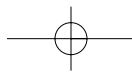
There is nothing unusual in this circularity. All complex problems have mutually dependent elements. Everything *i* connected to

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self-levitating airmen, using our hopes and purposes to get us off the ground. We are *al ay* having to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Notice, however, that because things are interconnected, if we *ca* get started, the good things start reinforcing one another. There are not only vicious circles, but virtuous ones as well.

Our present situation then is not so different from that which obtained before other great periods of reform. If we can take the initial steps, there is the real possibility that a virtuous circle will take hold. We will then look back in astonishment and wonder how we did it.

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